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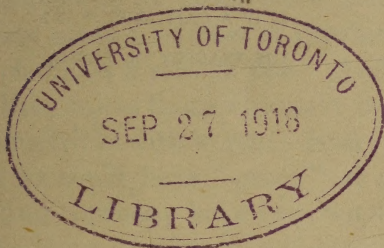
*German Aims Series.*

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# THOSE GERMAN PEACE OFFERS

By

WILLIAM STEPHEN SANDERS

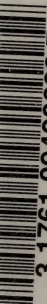


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*BY THE SAME AUTHOR:*

IF THE KAISER GOVERNED BRITAIN.

GERMANY'S TWO VOICES.

IS IT A CAPITALIST WAR?

THE TRAGEDY OF RUSSIA.

# THOSE GERMAN PEACE OFFERS

BY WM. STEPHEN SANDERS.

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**T**HE British Government has been taxed with having thrown away “opportunities for peace.” If this means what it appears to do—that we might have by now secured a democratic or clean peace and at the same time saved a number of invaluable lives—the charge is a serious one. And it must mean this, unless those who make it are merely playing tricks with words. Everyone knows that we could have “peace” at any time by letting Germany have her own way—by leaving her robberies unredressed and her power to terrify Europe increased instead

of diminished. But it was to prevent this that we went to war, and if we were to submit to it after four years of terrible warfare it would mean defeat and that we had spent our blood and wealth for nothing. We can always have "peace" on the terms on which "Russia" has it—Russia who threw down her arms, received a "scrap of paper," and continually sends out pathetic messages that the Germans are not observing it.

What is the case and where is the evidence of the critics who imply that we have missed the chance of a real peace?

### *Allies' Terms in Detail.*

Mr. Lloyd George stated our terms concisely when he spoke of "Restitution, Reparation, and Guarantees." Have these been within our reach by negotiation? Our

terms have been stated in detail over and over again. If Germany intended to grant them, why should she allow her soldiers to be killed and her trade to be strangled? It is true that she offered eighteen months ago to discuss peace, but only in secret conference. When we described our conditions frankly the Kaiser replied, with what he called "burning indignation and holy wrath," and he has since continued to send his subjects to slaughter! If Germany has ever been ready to grant the peace that every Englishman demands, with its satisfaction for justice and its guarantees of safety, why should she continue to resist it at such infinite cost? Can there be any explanation except that she has no intention whatever of satisfying justice or of letting the world be made "safe for democracy"?



### *The One Formal Offer.*

Germany's one formal offer of negotiations was made in a Note to America in December, 1916. It contained the brazen falsehood that "it was for the defence of their existence and freedom of their natural development that the four Allied Powers (Germany, Austria, Turkey, and Bulgaria) were constrained to take up arms." Prince Lichnowsky, Germany's own Ambassador, has told us that she insisted upon war for the massacre of Serbia when all the rest of Europe was strong for peace. But however unpromising this prelude of lies might be, President Wilson did his utmost to turn the opening to account and to see if peace could be accomplished.

Germany made fair professions, speaking of her "respect for the rights of other nations," and declaring that the Central Powers did not "seek to crush or annihilate

their adversaries." The practical side of that benevolent disposition had not yet been exposed by the treatment since accorded to Russia and Rumania and by the replacing of Armenia under the horrors of Turkish Government. But, as the Allies observed in their reply—"While Germany is proclaiming peace and security to the world, she is deporting Belgian citizens by thousands and reducing them to slavery." Still, President Wilson took Berlin at its word. The President made it his business to further the placing of the issues before the world's judgment seat. He suggested "that an early opportunity be sought to call out from all the nations now at war such an account of their respective views as to the terms upon which the war might be concluded and the arrangements which would be deemed satisfactory as a guarantee against its renewal or the kindling of any similar

conflict in the future as would make it possible frankly to compare them." He urged both sides to table their terms.

The Allies did so at once, but Germany declined to give a single hint of her proposals. She asked instead for "a meeting of delegates of the belligerent States at some neutral place." She would have nothing to say except in a conference with closed doors. Her aims, we must conclude, would not bear the light of day. As for those which had been declared by the Allies, the Kaiser speedily denounced them in a proclamation to his people and called upon their "iron strength of will" to continue the conflict.

This proclamation is in itself conclusive evidence of Germany's refusal to entertain a just peace. To say that Germany gave us an "opportunity of peace" in 1916 is merely to say that she gave us an opportunity of kissing her tyrannical sceptre.



*“ No Annexations and No Indemnities.”*

The next of the so-called “ opportunities for peace ” centres in the Reichstag resolution of July 19, 1917, commonly described as embodying the principle of “ no annexations or indemnities.” This pronouncement, after repeating the falsehood about a “ defensive war,” went on to say :

“ The Reichstag strives for a peace of understanding and of permanent reconciliation of the peoples. With such a peace, forced acquisitions of territory and political, financial, or economic oppressions are incompatible.”

It is these professions that are said to have offered a chance for peace by negotiation of which the Allies failed to avail themselves. Such an opinion was not shared by the German Minority Socialists, whose

leader, Herr Haase, described the resolution as a meaningless piece of hypocrisy. But even if it were sincerely intended by its supporters, that is a long way from saying that it afforded any solid basis of negotiations. The Reichstag has no power of control whatever over German policy. The value of its sentiments depends entirely upon the willingness of the German Government to adopt and execute them. The Imperial Chancellor (Michaelis), in speaking upon the resolution, reminded his hearers of this fact by saying: "I will not permit the conduct of affairs to be taken from my hands."

He gave no official endorsement to the Reichstag's declaration, his nearest approach being to lay down his own catalogue of peace principles, and to add "These ends are attainable within the limits of your resolution *as I understand it.*" How the German Government understood the

resolution may be judged from Germany's treatment of Russia and Rumania.

The German Socialists themselves were unable to disguise the fact that the "No Annexations" demonstration was a mere manoeuvre for the furthering of a "German" peace. One of their leaders, Herr David, explained the trick when he declared that Germany must use the "pacifist pincer" and the "military pincer" alternately in order to serve her purposes; and the *Vorwärts* dwelt upon the debilitating effect which a Peace Conference, if it could be procured, would have upon the will and perseverance of Germany's adversaries.

### *How the Bolsheviks were Treated.*

When the German diplomatists and generals met the Bolshevik delegates at Brest-Litovsk they adjourned the proceedings for ten days in order to let the

Allies join the deliberations and extend the discussion to that of a general peace. It has constantly been suggested that the latter were at fault in not entering the spider's parlour, and giving him the opportunity of entangling these likewise in his web of sophistry and falsehood.

If the Allies had followed the deplorable example of Russia, agreed to an armistice, and attended the conference with no knowledge of Germany's proposals—except that they would not be such as they could honourably accept—it would have been a confession of defeat. The Kaiser's agents would have played with the Allies' representatives as they played with Trotsky. Then they would have disclosed their terms as they did to the Russians, trusting that the hope of peace awakened in the peoples of the Allied countries would make it impossible for the Allied Governments to

resume armed resistance to the German demands. This would have meant a triumph for Prussian militarism far greater than that achieved over Russia.

The treatment of the deluded Bolsheviks, the treachery and brutality of the Germans in the Ukraine and the other occupied territories, prove the wisdom of the Allies in declining to be led blindfold into such an obvious trap.

### *Offers to Separate the Allies.*

The Central Powers have made several efforts to tempt the Allies separately to enter into individual negotiations and to break the pledge which they exchanged in the Pact of London to stand by one another. There is an example of this in the Austrian Emperor's letter for communication to the French President in the first half of 1917 (since denied by himself under the menace



of the Berlin whip), holding out inducements which could only have been realised (if at all) by the betrayal of Italy. In the same way last September an intimation was given to the British Government through a neutral Power that Germany was prepared to discuss peace with it. The answer was returned that Germany might forward her proposals and the British Government would communicate them to its Allies. No proposals were sent: Germany had nothing to offer that would bear the light of open discussion or would not stand revealed as a refusal of our terms of Restitution, Reparation, and Guarantees.

### *The Papal Note of 1917.*

Another instance of the more open deployments of the German method may be noted in connection with the Pope's "Peace Letter" of August 1, 1917. The main

points of this document were that "the moral force of right should replace the material force of arms," and that the Powers should agree to diminished armaments, and the setting up of arbitration; that all invaded territories should be evacuated, and that there should be, "as a general principle, complete and reciprocal condonation" of the damages of war. The last-named principle would have meant that Germany would retain all the plunder she had secured in the course of her invasions, while countries like Belgium and Serbia, which she had stripped to the bone, would be cast upon the future in a state of pauperism. It was a conception with obvious attractions for Berlin, and the German Government's reply was naturally sympathetic. But again there was not a syllable of assent to the Allies' standards. The mind of the Allies upon the Papal invitation was effectively expressed

in the answer sent by President Wilson, who took frank issue with the "condonation" clause by saying, "We believe that the intolerable wrongs done in this war by the furious and brutal power of the Imperial German Government ought to be repaired." He pointed out that the Vatican programme of peace would secure "a recuperation of the strength and renewal of the policy" by which that Government had dragged the world into war, and that, in any case, "the word of an ambitious and intriguing Government" was something which "no man, no nation, could now depend on."

*Declining All Discussion.*

Down to the present time Germany has continued to refuse all information as to what her terms of peace are. But in a couple of speeches delivered in January and

February of this year the Imperial Chancellor, Count Hertling, made certain very definite statements as to what they were not, and supplied the most recent and overwhelming evidence that Germany has nothing to offer to accept which would not mean defeat for the Allies. He "declined any discussion of the Belgian questions" until the Allies should pledge themselves to guarantee to Germany and her confederates all the territory of which they stood possessed. As to Russia, he rejected any interference from other parties between the Central Powers and their victim. He declared "the integrity of Turkey"—that is to say, her sovereignty over the Armenians and other races whom she has massacred by the hundred thousand—to be one of the important and vital interests of the German Empire. Such was his sweeping answer to President Wilson's contention that "peace

should rest upon the rights of peoples great or small, weak or powerful, their equal right to freedom and security and self-government."

To the German Chancellor the "rights" of the Governments he represents are everything and the rights of the peoples they have mastered in conquest are nothing. And the sincerity of the attitude could not be better shown than in the clauses of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk which replaced under the cruel power of the Turk those Caucasian peoples who had been emancipated from it for forty years.

Equally definite was Count Hertling's rejection of any recognition of justice in the settlement of peace. He announced that the German armies felt "the unbroken joy of battle," and he spurned the conception "of any tribunal sitting in judgment upon guilty Germany for all sorts of crimes."



There is, therefore, to be no record of the world's judgment upon that country's breach of treaties, upon her invasion of a neutral country, upon her wholesale butcheries of civilians, upon her ruthless massacre of seamen, upon her enslavement of populations, or her torpedoing of hospital ships. It is one of her foremost conditions of peace that she is to enjoy every advantage and to pay no penalty for her outrages upon international law, good faith and humanity—that her superiority over all law is to be recognised by the ignoring of her long record of outrage.

*Insincere Approaches.*

President Wilson on May 18, 1918, answered those who claim that opportunities for a "clean and democratic peace" have been thrown away. He said "we are not to be diverted from the grim purpose of

winning the war by any insincere approaches upon the subject of peace. I can say with a clear conscience that I have tested these intimations and have found them insincere. I now recognise them for what they are, an opportunity to have a free hand in the East, to carry out the purposes of conquest and exploitation. Every proposal with regard to accommodation in the West involves a reservation with regard to the East. . . . If they wish for peace let them come forward through accredited representatives and lay their terms on the table. We have laid ours."

*Frontiers "Drawn by History."*

Herr von Kuehlmann, the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, speaking in the Reichstag on June 24, 1918, repeated the fable that Germany had published her peace proposals, but in support of

this contention he simply repeated the vague generalities which have been already quoted. He, moreover, made it quite clear that Germany is not prepared to agree to any peace programme which would satisfy the just claims of the Allies. On the contrary, he demanded for Germany and her confederates the frontiers "drawn by history." This deliberately vague expression could, and would no doubt, be used to cover the robbery of the Flemish portion of Belgium, the Baltic Provinces, and the latest outrage in Eastern Europe or Asia. On the subject of Belgium, which is the test of absolute sincerity, he declined to make any statement that would bind Germany. In plain words Herr von Kuehlmann's ambiguous phrases mean that, in common with his Imperial master, he is not prepared to discuss peace unless Germany is assured that she is to be considered the victor with

the right to retain whatever portion of her booty she pleases.

Germany has not laid her terms on the table, but the Kaiser has told us plainly what he insists upon as the first condition of peace. On March 10, 1918, he stated: "We desire to live in friendship with neighbouring peoples, *but the victory of the German arms must first be recognised.*"

This is the one sincere and genuine peace offer made by the head of the German State: the recognition by the world that Germany is victorious. Is there a Briton who would suggest that it would form the basis for a "clean and democratic peace"?





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